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ABSTRACT

This study queried master's level teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (MA TESOL) from Taiwan and Thailand, all of whom received their degrees in the United States, returned home to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL), then returned to the United States to pursue doctoral degrees. The study examined the extent to which MA TESOL programs fulfilled non-native EFL teachers' needs and expectations and factors hindering the fulfillment of those needs and expectations. Results found a gap between the theory respondents learned in their programs and the experience of teaching in their home countries. What they wanted most from their programs was improved language proficiency and EFL teaching methodologies. Instead, programs emphasized English as a Second Language (ESL) and were theory-oriented. They all had difficulty applying ESL-based teaching methodologies to their EFL teaching due to sociocultural differences. The researcher surveyed and interviewed one doctoral student, focusing on reasons for his replies, the researcher's assumptions about his replies, and reasons for tension during the interviews. The paper discusses what language teacher educators could do when facing non-native EFL teachers in language teacher education programs. The questionnaire and interview questions are appended. (Contains 35 references.) (SM)

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From Western Language Teacher Education Programs to Eastern EFL Classrooms: Alienation of Theory and Practice

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Introduction

A large number of non-native English speakers (NNSs) are enrolled in Master's programs for teachers of English as a Second Language (MA TESOL) programs in the United States every year (England & Roberts, 1989; Kamhi-Stein, 2000). Of the students admitted to the TESOL teacher education programs in North America, Britain, and Australia, approximately 40% were non-native speakers. The majority of these NNSs will return to their home countries to teach after they complete their MA TESOL programs (Liu, 1999).

Over the past decade, survey-based studies have been done to explore needs and concerns regarding NNSs in MA TESOL programs, either nation-wide (England & Roberts, 1989; Polio, 1994) or in a single MA TESOL program (Liu, 1999). These studies concluded that MA TESOL programs failed to accommodate these NNSs' perceived needs, particularly their demand for more appropriate L2 acquisition theories and methodologies, language improvement, and cultural understanding.

By using a different research approach, Kamhi-Stein (2000) analyzed the literature (e.g. Kamhi-Stein, 1999, Medgyes, 1999, Samimy et al, 1999, Thomas, 1999, etc.) related to NNSs who were either teachers or teachers-in-preparation and concluded that their perceived needs and concerns fell into four general areas: (1) low confidence and self-perceived challenges to professional competence; (2) self-perceived language needs (also discussed in Carvers, 1988; England & Roberts, 1989; Johnston, 1994; Medgyes, 1983; Murdoch, 1994, etc.); (3) lack of voice and visibility in the TESOL profession; and (4) self-perceived prejudice based on ethnicity or non-native status.

Along with the exploring of needs and concerns of NNSs, transferability of Western theory to EFL classrooms has been an issue discussed from various perspectives. According to

Liu (1999), theories, such as the communicative approach, in MA TESOL programs are basically rooted in "Western ethnocentric ideologies" (Liu, 1999, p.199), which promote new methodologies generated from Western ideological values while condemning the traditional methods still popular in the non-Western world. Burnaby and Sun's study (1989) examined Chinese teachers' view of Western language teaching and cited various constraints on implementing Western language-teaching methods, such as the context of the wider curriculum, traditional teaching methods, class sizes and schedules, resources and equipment, and the low status of teachers who teach communicative rather than analytic skills. Similar results were also found in Li's research (1998), in which she investigated teachers' perceived difficulties in introducing the communicative approach in South Korea. These difficulties primarily resulted from the differences between the underlying educational theories of South Korean and those of Western countries. This issue was also discussed in Babcock's study. Babcock (1993) examined the influence of Taiwanese culture on the conduct of students of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Based on the observation from the verbal and nonverbal cues in English classrooms in Taiwan, Babcock concluded that there was a conflict between traditional Chinese values and norms and Western values and norms.

Over the past decade, despite the fact that studies have been conducted to understand the needs and concerns of NNS in MA TESOL programs, few studies have been done to look at the issues from the perspective of those who have already graduated from MA TESOL programs and gone back to teach in their home countries. While most studies tend to investigate NNSs when they are enrolled in MA TESOL programs, it is essential to understand how these NNSs think about their programs after they have graduated and have begun to apply what they learned in the program. Their insights can help teacher educators in MA TESOL programs to better understand

what issues their NNSs deal with, and what challenges these NNSs face when they go home to teach after they complete their program.

In this study, four MA TESOL graduates (two male and two female; three from Taiwan and one from Thailand) were interviewed. They received their degrees from four different MA TESOL programs in the United States, went back to their home countries to teach English as a foreign language (EFL), and came back to the United States to pursue their doctoral degrees.

Three questions were addressed in this study.

1. To what extent do MA TESOL programs fulfill the needs and expectations of non-native EFL teachers?
2. What are the factors that hinder the fulfillment of the needs and expectations of non-native EFL teachers?
3. What recommendations and implications can be drawn from this study for MA TESOL programs?

Expected Outcomes

Based on my own experience as someone who came to the United States for a language education program and then return to Taiwan to teach, I expected that my informants would describe a gap between the theory they learned in their MA TESOL programs and the experience of teaching in their home countries. My expectations were confirmed by the informants from Taiwan (two female and one male), who said that what they needed most from their programs was improvement in language proficiency and EFL teaching methodologies. Instead, their programs focused on English as a second language (ESL) and were more theory-oriented. By theory-oriented, they meant that the programs focused on research in the field rather than on applying research findings in the classroom. In addition, they all experienced difficulties in

applying the ESL-based teaching methodologies to their EFL teaching due to socio-cultural differences (e.g., rigid educational system, different kinds of parental and administrative involvement, etc.). As one of the informants illustrated in her interview:

> The purposes are different and the applications are different. Of course the approach will be different also. As an EFL teacher in non-English speaking country the approach will be much more different because of your audience. The environments are different; the cultures are different; the applications are different. So, everything is almost different. The course materials [in MA TESOL programs] should be different.

Shift of Research Focus

Like most qualitative research, in which the researcher not only shapes and reshapes their initial questions but also generates new questions based on the emerging themes observed in the field (Creswell, 1998; Watson, Burke & Harste, 1989), my questions developed in my interviews with Mana[1], the male informant from Thailand.

Mana, a male, is a doctoral student in a language education department in the United States. He had two years of teaching experience at a college in Thailand before he completed in an MA TESOL program in the United States. He went back to Thailand to teach at the graduate level for ten years before returning again to the United States for his Ph.D. degree.

First, I administered a questionnaire (Appendix A) comprised of six parts (background, decision, goals, program, teaching, and suggestions) to Mana through e-mail. Then, I conducted a semi-structured face-to-face interview (Appendix B). Later, I conducted a follow-up interview. Transcripts of the interviews were sent back to Mana for his member check and further comments.

While I was still interested in finding out the answers to the questions I originally proposed for my study, I was even more interested in the discourse that both Mana and I brought to the interview. My inquiry shifted from finding out his response to the questions asked in my semi-structured interview, to focusing on why Mana was saying what he was saying and, finally, to asking myself what was happening that caused tensions to evolve during the interviews.

These discursive voices shifted my inquiry to the following:

1. What intrigued me most from the interview with Mana and why?
2. What assumptions did both Mana and I make (consciously or unconsciously) in terms of theory, knowledge and practice?
3. What model for teacher education can be drawn from the discourse between Mana and me?

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The conceptual framework used to look at the discourse between Mana and me was a combined one, which draws from an integrated view of teachers' beliefs, assumptions and knowledge (Wood, 1996), a teacher's personal practical knowledge (Golombek, 1998), and finally, a reconceptulization of language teacher education (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). In addition, my personal lens in this research also played an interpretive role in this study.

Wood (1996) states that "The teacher's beliefs, assumptions and knowledge play an important role in how the teacher interprets events related to teaching (both in preparation for the teaching and in the classroom) and thus affect the teaching decisions that are ultimately made." (p. 184) Teachers hold assumptions about what language is, what it consists of, and how it works. Teachers also make assumptions about language learning. For example, some believe the

[1] "Mana" was a name chosen by my informant, who told me that this name sounds very Thai and it means

best way to learn a foreign language is to live in an environment where the target language is used. Teachers also make assumptions about language teaching. Some assume, for instance, that the most effective way to teach a foreign language is by introducing grammatical structures and by having students memorize them by heart so that they can apply them whenever they are needed.

Why do teachers make such assumptions about what language is, and how it should be learned and taught? Golombek (1998) suggests that these assumptions are drawn from teachers' personal practical knowledge, which is "mediated by their experiences as teachers, learners, and persons outside the classroom: personal and interpersonal factors; and values, as well as their professional knowledge" (p. 495). Teachers' personal practical knowledge, consisting of beliefs, assumptions and knowledge, serves as a kind of interpretive framework to guide their sense-making processes, to inform practice and to shape and reshape a teacher's understanding of teaching and learning.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) also suggest that teachers should not be viewed as empty vessels waiting to be filled with all kinds of knowledge in a teacher education program. Rather, "They are individuals who enter the program with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classroom." (p. 401) Freeman and Johnson proposes a broader epistemological view of ESOL teacher education that takes the issues of the teacher as a learner of teaching, the social context of schools and schooling, as well as the pedagogical process into consideration.

In this paper, I try to faithfully and objectively report what Mana said and what I observed in the interviews; however, I believe what I asked or did not ask during the interviews and what I

"perseverance," which is his guiding belief.

selected or did not select from the transcripts reflect my subjectivity. Before I present what I learned from Mana about theory, practice and, knowledge in terms of his MA TESOL program and his EFL classroom in Thailand, I believe it is equally essential to present how I positioned theory, practice, and knowledge in my MA program in Language Education and my EFL classroom in Taiwan.

The Researcher

I received my Master's degree in Language Education in 1994 and went back to Taiwan to teach. From 1996-1999, I was an English instructor at a college in Taiwan.

Learning in a Language Education Program in the USA

Links among theory, practice and knowledge. My beliefs as a language teacher were grounded in a theoretical model proposed by Watson (1994), who asserts that teaching starts with theory (hypothesizing), practice (doing), and with an established set of beliefs (knowing to be true). Teachers need to be aware of their underlying theories and to articulate the supporting belief system for a particular experience or strategy that is put into practice. Practices prepare teachers to raise questions, then to actively formulate theories (hypothesize, guess, have hunches) about those practices. Teachers can examine their values by bringing their beliefs to classroom and studying evidence gained from theorizing and practicing.

It is also my belief that language teachers need to have a perspective on language instruction that is consistent with their beliefs. That is, teachers should put into operation a set of instructional practices based on their philosophical stance. These instructional practices include teaching approaches, curriculum, methodologies, strategies, techniques and skills. All these elements are interrelated to each other and thus should be consistent.

Western ideologies vs. Eastern practices. When I was in the MA program, I found myself rather persistently trying to make sense of the theories I had learned in the Language Education department and the MA TESOL program. I knew there would be challenges if I wanted to apply the theories that are basically rooted in "Western ethnocentric ideologies" (Liu, 1999, p.199). However, because I came to the U.S. to learn how to improve English education in Taiwan, I believed that there should be ways for me to implement the ideas in Taiwan. I was never sure exactly how. I knew, however, that I was not ready to go back to Taiwan to teach when I completed my Master's degree because I still carried the same question in my mind: How do I resolve the discrepancy between Western theories and Eastern practices? For example, while some Western theories (e.g., Whole Language approach) encourage invented spelling (unconventional form) for meaning construction, writing in most Eastern cultures (e.g., China, Taiwan, Japan, etc.) is "not just a useful practical skill, but also as an aesthetic experience and a moral discipline" (Parry, 1998, p. 246). Not being able to write perfectly and beautifully does not only imply "illiteracy" but also indicates a moral imperfection.

I did not know how to respond to my peers when they complained that what they learned in the program was not going to work in Taiwan because, truthfully, I had the same struggle too. I did not know how I would position myself if my future colleagues questioned the legitimacy of applying the Western teaching methodologies to my EFL English classroom in Taiwan.

When I completed all the required courses for my Master's degree, I decided to stay to write an optional Master's thesis. In retrospect, I realize it was one way that I could force myself to closely examine the issues and concerns derived from the discrepancy between Western theories and Eastern practices before I went back to Taiwan to teach. The main issue I posed in my thesis was "Can whole language, which is a Western philosophy, be applied in Taiwan,

where the educational system is rooted in Eastern culture, which is very different from the one in which whole language developed?"

I worked long and hard, trying my best to answer the question I posed to myself. I started by discussing the problems we had been facing in English education in Taiwan and analyzing the causes of the problems. I then proposed how some of the principles of whole language could be applied to teaching English in Taiwan in order to solve the problems, while also acknowledging that the educational systems and the assumptions of teaching and learning vary greatly. I questioned the language environment, oral ability of learners, teacher qualifications and instructional goals arising from differences between English as first (L1), second (L2) and foreign language (EFL).

My beliefs. My position in answering the question I posed was that we English teachers and educators who had studied in the United States needed to do something "different"; otherwise, we would continue to face the same problems in English education in Taiwan. To do something different meant first to challenge preconceived beliefs about what language was and what it was for. Only when we were able to challenge our assumptions about teaching and learning English, would we be able to think differently and do things differently in classrooms to make a change in English education in Taiwan.

After being exposed to a holistic approach, I identified the problems facing English education in Taiwan as resulting from too much emphasis on form, isolated skills, accuracy, competition, and the product, as well as a limited English environment. I decided to go back to Taiwan to teach in a way that focused more on meaning, integrated language skills, fluency, cooperation, and process. I was also determined to create a richer English environment.

Teaching in an EFL Classroom in Taiwan

My way vs. their way? In classroom practices, I was aware of the "moment-to-moment" decisions (Ulichny, 1996, p. 170) that I made to mediate between task and student performance. I consciously chose to interpret "student performance cues" (Johnson, 1992, p. 516) on the spot, based on the position I took as a result of writing my Master's thesis. The perspective was that if I wanted to solve the problems facing English education in Taiwan, non-traditional ways of viewing and practicing teaching and learning should be adopted. For example, in every new class, my students wanted me to translate the text from English to Chinese for them. They did not believe that they would be able to understand an English text without translation. Drawing from Golombek's "personal practical knowledge" (1998, p. 447) as an interpretive framework, I completely understood how my students felt and where their beliefs came from, since I had learned English as a foreign language in this culture.

My struggles. I constantly struggled with the issue of what my students wanted and what I believed they really needed based on the critical perspective I took. Students were used to the kind of English class that was more skill-based (Burnaby & Sun, 1989). I, as their English teacher, on the other hand, wanted to bring them a holistic curriculum. I wanted them to believe that my way, if not totally opposite to theirs, would be a better way for them to learn English. Only when they experienced my way of learning, would they be more motivated to learn English and to understand the true meaning of learning a foreign language.

My inquires. My Western approach was fairly successful in terms of promoting learning interest and lowering learning anxiety, based on the responses from my students and the surveys I administered in the classes. However, I continued to wonder about the critical perspective I

brought into my approach and curriculum. I was constantly asking myself the following questions: What were the blind spots I was not able to detect due to the perspective I took? Was my teaching, perceived mainly as a Western way, better, or was a teaching approach based on the students' needs, namely, an Eastern way, in fact, better? Was I trying to "Westernize" my students, since I was aware that certain values were also embedded in the approach I chose for my students? While I embraced the Western way of teaching, what methodologies, strategies, techniques and skills should I use in the Eastern EFL context in order to be congruent with the approach/perspective I took?

I understood that this theory-belief-practice system was not unchangeable. Teachers should gain new insights from successful and unsuccessful practice, and refine their beliefs about how students learn and use language (Watson, 1994). Different sets of instructional practice will evolve based on different beliefs. It seemed to me that not taking a critical perspective into my teaching would be against my personal values, emotions, beliefs and goals. However, the process of constantly questioning the perspective I took was painful.

I believe this is why I was so engaged in the conversation with Mana during the interview. I wanted to learn how Mana positioned theories he learned in his program and what struggles he had in his EFL classroom in his home country.

Results

I assumed that Mana, like most of the MA TESOL graduates, would complain about his program because it was not practical. Surprisingly, when I asked, "In retrospect, what did you like most about your MA TESOL program?" Mana replied:

> The theoretical grounding, the theoretical stance of the program. Because most of the courses will focus on the TESL theoretical aspects. I think the only practical course I

took was 'Introduction to TESL'. That was the only practical course. The rest were about theories. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, linguistics theories, testing, I think. All these are theoretical in nature and I like them.

Mana was not only able to define what theories are but also what theories are for in relation to teaching and learning. I was impressed by the way he defined theories, which means to me that he is able to integrate theories as part of life (e.g. teaching and learning), both consciously and unconsciously. As he said:

> Theories mean the same as your intuition, your hunches, and your beliefs, principles. These are theories. In other words, whatever we do in life we do it theoretically even if we may not be aware of it. There has to be some kind of belief or hunch or intuition that led to your action. That's what I mean by theory. In the ultimate sense any theory is practical.... I believe that theoretical stuff, such as in linguistics, psychology, sociolinguistics, communication, education, and anthropology, can be solid bases on which teachers rely in order for them to make better decisions about what to teach, to whom and when. That is, I don't think that teachers can just ignore theories.

Among all the theories Mana learned from his MA TESOL program, he most valued the "consciousness raising" he gained from learning the theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). He said:

> By consciousness raising, I meant SLA theories have the potential to keep teachers informed of how students learn based on empirical evidence, not anecdotal evidence. That is, it is hoped that at the very least, teachers will have to think carefully before jumping to any definite conclusion about how and why their students excel or fail in their learning. SLA theories helped me explain students' learning process. So I would

> like to claim that when I teach writing in the college where I have been teaching for ten years, SLA theories help me to think twice before I condemn any students because I always realize that this is an example of interlanguage and they are learning. I have to wait.

Furthermore, Mana gave an example of how SLA helped him understand why students' learning did not turn out as teachers had expected:

> Let's say you are out of a classroom. You complain to your colleagues, 'I don't know why most of my students today seemed not able to understand the usage of present perfect despite the fact that I have given a lot of examples, a lot of situations, a lot of encouragement and motivation and despite the fact that I explained in Thai.' And then I would say, 'Wait a minute! Acquiring present perfect, tense and aspect, right, is not a very easy thing across languages.' In other words, by teaching present perfect to your students, to your Thai students, means that you are trying to make them think like native speakers of English. I said this because I am aware of my SLA training. Learning is not linear.

Based on my theory-belief-practice framework, I made two assumptions after listening to what Mana said about what theories are for him and how theories, particularly SLA theories, help him interpret what goes on in his EFL classroom. One is that as an EFL teacher, Mana would try to apply the theories to his practices. The other one is that Mana, like me, would also struggle a lot in trying to transfer Western ideologies to Eastern classrooms.

Assumption 1: There is a Link between Theory and Practice

I found my first assumption was wrong after I had the following dialogues with Mana. This first one went like this:

Mana: I think I would be very frustrated if I make too many grammatical mistakes in writing and reading.

Gloria: Would you correct your students?

Mana: Oh, YES. Oh. YES! Right away.

Gloria: Right away?

Mana: Oh, right away.

Gloria: Would students feel frustrated?

Mana: Oh, YES ! Some of them cried. I said, "You will love me later. I do not care if you hate me now. You will appreciate what I did for you."

Gloria: How is your practice related to SLA theories?

Mana: No. It's contradictory to a lot of SLA theories.

Gloria: But why did you still believe that it was good for your students?

Mana: Because it's Thai context. Because SLA is a Western innovation.

Did Mana not say that he learned from SLA theories that EFL teachers need to be patient because learning a foreign language takes time? Why would Mana correct his students right away, particularly in front of everybody? I was even more surprised to learn that Mana knew he was violating what he believed.

Even though both Mana and I believe in the importance of theories, we have very different perspectives on how we position our theories in relation to our EFL practices. I believe that theories are used to inform practices, and practices should inform theories. In contrast, Mana draws a very clear line between theory and practice. Theories do not imply practices, nor do practices entail theories. He said:

Mana: I believe SLA theory is not about how to teach a language but is about how a language is learned. What I said is that SLA theory has nothing to do with how to teach a language, but rather with how a language is learned.

Gloria: Shouldn't how it is learned influences how it is taught?

Mana: No! I do not think SLA theory will go that far. This is so true. It is very important because otherwise students will keep saying 'Why do I have to take SLA theories because they will help me how to teach a language or not? ' Of course not! The purpose of SLA theory is not to tell you how to teach but just to inform you how a given language is learned by a given group of students in a given situation. Now, I got it ! I keep thinking 'What did I say to get her [Gloria] to believe that the way I teach is not consistent with the way I believe [laugh]. Now, I got it! You must have thought SLA theories teach us how to teach.

Gloria: Are there any implications for teaching?

Mana: No! No! No! There is no link between SLA theories and teaching.

Mana's belief toward SLA was another key factor for him to justify his contradiction. Theory for Mana is a game, which he used as a way to justify why he did not think there was a link between SLA theories and his EFL practices. He explained: "Because I realized that SLA theories are not finalized yet. Everything is in transition. What is true this year may not be true next year, may be proved wrong the next year by new data. This is just like a game. SLA is just like a game, an academic game, a theory."

My next question was that if Mana did not rely on the theories he learned in his MA TESOL program to teach, how did he make instructional decisions when he taught in his EFL classroom? I learned from the interviews that Mana said that he used "common sense approach"

to teach EFL. By "common sense approach", he meant: "a person's ways of thinking based on his/her life experiences, which are trained by external factors, such as teachers, friends, past reading experiences and conversations, etc." In addition, he also believes that people learn to teach by teaching, but not by learning how to teach. He stated:

> Nobody can do education for you [Nobody should tell you how to teach] but you yourself. Education is up to you. You have to make the first move. ... I think it's not fair to say that I enter an MA program because I want to learn how to teach. You don't have to. If you want to learn how to teach, just go into your classroom and teach. You can learn from it. Really! Really!

Assumption 2: There are Struggles in Transferring Western Theories to Eastern Classrooms

My second assumption was made based on my how I positioned theories learned from my Master's program, my teaching experience in Taiwan and literature (e.g., Babcock, 1993; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Gardner, 1989; Heiman, 1994; Li, 1998; Parry, 1998). Because of my mindset that I wanted to learn from my Master's program to make a difference in my EFL classroom, I assumed that Mana would expect the same thing from his MA TESOL program. Again, I was wrong. Our conversation proceeded:

> Gloria: Do you feel that your teaching has changed since you received your MA TESOL degree?
>
> Mana: No! No! No! The grammar translation method, always.
>
> Gloria: Were you happy that nothing changed?
>
> Mana: Yes! Yes!
>
> Gloria: Can you talk a little bit more on that? How did you teach these adults?
>
> Mana: Grammar translation method.

Gloria: What do you think about your students? Where they happy about it?

Mana: I do not know whether they were happy or not. They were respectful and they were patient with me. Because I like grammar, I like teaching grammar.

Mana explained to me why he likes to teach grammar. He said, "Explaining grammar points in Thai convinces me that most of the students can fathom those points far deeper than another other method."

Having the discrepancy in mind about Western theories and Eastern EFL practices, I chose to embrace Western theories in my EFL classrooms and purposefully chose to ignore the socio-cultural factors (e.g., assumptions about English teaching and learning embedded in my culture), believing that that was the only way to make a change. Transferring Western theories to the Eastern classroom is also an issue for Mana, but in a different form, which is strongly associated with Mana's awareness, identity and resistance.

Awareness. I did not realize before I came to the United States for my Master's degree that theories are not neutral but embedded within ideologies that developed along with a culture. Mana was very aware of this point even before he entered his MA TESOL program.

Mana: SLA is a Western innovation.

Gloria: You were aware of that?

Mana: Oh! Yes! Then I broke the rule [I did not do what the SLA theories told me to do].

Gloria: You knew that you would learn something in Western way, which you might not be able to apply to your teaching in your country?

Mana: Oh, Yeah! Yeah! That's why I keep saying that I believe that there is not only one way of knowing and learning things.

Identity. Duff & Uchida (1997) argue that the negotiation of teachers' sociocultural identities and practices in EFL classrooms is full of "complexities and paradoxes associated with teachers' professional, social, political, and cultural identities and their presentation in class" (p. 451).

Mana told me that it was a hidden policy in Thailand that getting a degree from an English speaking country would make him more qualified because of direct input and exposure to the language. Interestingly enough, when asked if he wished that he could have more interaction with native speakers and culture in the United States, Mana seemed to interpret my question as if I asked him if he would be interested in becoming more Americanized.

> NO! NO! I simply wanted to get into the university where I used to study. I thought it would be interesting to learn from new people. But I had no intention of becoming an American, to speak like an American, or to act like an American.

Resistance. Mana acknowledged that he could not reject the importance of Western theories because he said, "After all, school is a Western product." However, he resisted and objected to the Western influences on him as a Thai and as a teacher. He perceived himself as artificial, fake or lying if he tried to think in an American way. He did not think he had to act like an American in order to teach successfully.

> But being here as a graduate student for only three or four years doesn't really affect me. I don't think so. It would be a fake on my part. It would be a lie that I would forget my Thai when I return home [laugh] and then I would think in the American way. It would be very artificial. I don't think so.

Mana's resistance and objection to Western influences were also revealed to his students.

In addition to Mana's awareness that SLA is a Western innovation and cannot be totally relied on, he is very conscious of the potential influences of Western culture on his EFL students.

Gloria: If you learn different styles, different things from different cultures…

Mana: Oh, No way!

Gloria: When you go back home… [Mana interrupted]

Mana: Don't ! Don't act like Americans. To me I am not gonna stand it…

Gloria: You… [Mana interrupted]

Mana: NO WAY! Students have to be properly respectful. All the rules they have too.

Mana's words gave me another perspective. What concerned me most in terms of applying Western ideologies to my EFL classrooms was whether or not I would "Westernize my students", meaning that the students would be forced to give up their traditional ways (e.g., Tradition is the source of knowledge and the teacher as the authority to pass down the knowledge.) and replace them with a progressive perspective (e.g., knowledge is created and shared.). Mana's concern went beyond the classroom and his role as an EFL teacher. He rejected the notion of acting, sounding, or thinking like an American. He claimed:

> Certainly to a large extent my role as a teacher teaching SLA theories would be like an mediator or importer of SLA theories from the Western world to the Thai EFL situation. But in order to do that I don't have to be an American. I don't have to act like American in order to do that successfully. I don't think so.

Implications for Language Teacher Education Programs

Mana and I may represent a certain percentage of non-native EFL teachers in language teacher education programs in the United States, which also represent two kinds of alienation of theory and practice (Clarke, 1994).

Mana: Alienation from Theory to Practice

Mana represents one kind of non-native EFL teachers who is a good EFL learner, has teaching experience before entering a MA TESOL program, enjoys learning theories and intellectual discussions in academia. He has a strong identity with his own culture, and has been very aware of the Western ideologies inherent in his learning and resists the potential Western influences on him as a learner in the MA TESOL program and on him as a teacher in his native country, Thailand.

Mana, like many other students in the MA TESOL program, may potentially be a successful EFL teacher in his native country because he possesses the knowledge-base (Shulman, 1987) that an EFL teacher needs. He grew up in the Thai culture (knowledge of educational context). In my opinion, he has been a very successful EFL learner in Thailand, so he knows what learning English is like and what is the best way to learn English in Thailand (knowledge of learners and their characteristics). He has teaching experience in Thailand that he can employ to make sense of theories learned in the program (general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge). He takes a critical perspective on things he learned in his MA TESOL program and things he would teach to his students (knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds).

The literature discusses the importance of taking into account the social context of schools and schooling, teachers' experiences as learners and teachers, educational goals and values as well as personality (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Golombek, 1998; Ulichny, 1996), and Mana seems to portray a good example of it. As Mana stated, "The purpose and your own preference and your own agenda will determine which voice to present at particular moments. All these are contextualized." Freeman & Johnson (1998)'s reconceptualizing of the knowledge-

base of language teacher education is based on the notion of "Who teaches what to whom, where?" (p. 405) Mana's words again appear to serve a good example of this new epistemological framework.

On the other hand, however, would it also be possible that Mana's experience as a learner, his rich experiences as a teacher in Thailand, and his strong sense of resistance or even objection to Western ideologies serve as potential obstacles for opening up more possibilities to EFL teaching and learning in Thailand? Alienation from theory to practice was evident in the interviews (Figure 1).

Theory	**Pre-exiting mindset:** • Personalized theories • Common sense approach • Experience • Awareness • Identity • Resistance

Figure 1 Alienation of theory to practice

It seems to me that I was not able to question Mana's contradictions to theories, especially when Mana stated that "I should know best how to teach in Thailand because I'm Thai." What Mana said seemed to imply that he possessed the most legitimate knowledge on teaching Thai people EFL because his practice was drawn from his experience as a learner and a teacher in the Thai culture. Thus, when I had questions about what he did or did not do in the classroom, I did not know how to respond to Mana's reply that the theories I referred to were Western innovations and thus, may not be appropriate to be applied in an Eastern EFL context, such as Thailand. Sometimes, I even felt that Mana intellectually selected theories to perpetuate his "unexamined" (for me) practices in his classroom.

This experience makes me wonder if theoretical knowledge may have been separated from Mana's potential practice when Mana was enrolled in his MA TESOL program because Mana has been equipped with the pre-existing mindset that that transferability of theory is limited, that education is up to him and that his "trained common-sense approach" is what he will rely on in his teaching.

Gloria: Alienation from Practice to Theory

I, on the other hand, represent EFL teachers who come to language teacher education programs in the United States to seek a "cure" for the problems facing English education in their own native countries. It seemed to me that once I find the "cure", which would not only help me understand problems in my future English classroom, I could also potentially solve the problems facing English education in Taiwan. I was like a sponge absorbing as much as possible from my program. Every time a theory was introduced I tried to draw applications. I thought making a change in teaching/learning EFL was the first step to making a difference; and of course, I assumed that difference meant progress.

I knew the difference between Western and Eastern cultures and I was aware of the ideological or philosophical stances that these two different cultures take; however, I rationalized the gap by telling myself that "Good teaching is international, no matter Eastern or Western." I believed dividing them into Western and Eastern would limit my perspectives on language teaching and learning. The critical perspective I took opened up a different world and the possibility for me to look at issues concerning teaching and learning in Taiwan. However, the theoretical beliefs I held may have been alienated from my practice in the classroom (Figure 2).

Practice	**Theoretical beliefs:** • Seeking a cure • Making a difference

- Rationalizing theories
- Ignoring socio-cultural differences

Figure 2 Alienation of practice to theory

I wanted to make sure that theories I learned could be transferred to my EFL classrooms. I purposely chose to ignore the sociocultural factors inside and outside classrooms that could result in contradictory practices. I analyzed problems facing English education in Taiwan and rationalized solutions from theories to solve the problems. I thought being able to rationalize the theories meant being able to put them into practices. Apparently, rationalization of theories did not automatically set up the platform for me to transfer them to my practice. My dilemma was: What should my practice look like in an Eastern classroom when the Western theoretical knowledge is applied? To what extent can my Western theoretical knowledge be applied if I want to take socio-cultural factors into account?

Reflections

What could a language teacher educator do when facing non-native EFL teachers, like Mana and me, in language teacher education programs (e.g. MA TESOL programs, ESL/EFL language education programs, etc.)?

Language teacher educators should be able to understand the powerful effects on theory and practice of the pre-existing mindsets and theoretical beliefs that non-native EFL teachers bring with them to the programs. Several approaches have been proposed.

On-line reflection and sharing (Bowman, Boyle, Greenstone, Herndon & Valente, 2000), critical reflection for EFL teacher development (Kamhi-Stein & Galvan, 2000), and narrative approach (e.g., self-storying, self-understanding, Gerardo, 2000) were proposed as effective ways to create safe places for sharing the richness and complexity of teaching and the lives of teachers

and learners. These approaches also invite non-native EFL to reflect upon who they are and what they need in terms of what they bring to the program and what they wish to take back to their home countries.

These approaches suggest that "articulation is a process through which teachers clarify tensions that previously seemed to have no relationship with each other. How they understood the discourse was influenced by their personal practical knowledge, especially their emotional and moral concerns, resulting in a personalized discourse" (Golombek, 1998, p. 460). Both Mana and I brought our emotional and moral concerns into language teacher education programs. Articulation helps non-native EFL teachers recognize the personal philosophical stances inherent in the emotional and moral concerns carried from cross-cultural experiences and contexts.

I believe "reciprocal dialogues," like the dialogue between Mana and me in the interviews, are ways to interrogate and to examine the positionality of theory and practice. Once this kind of dialogue is opened in language teacher education programs, students may not agree with each other; however, the dialogue guides us through the process of examining how non-native EFL teachers position the Western theories gained in language teacher education programs in relation to their practice in Eastern EFL classrooms.

As a future teacher educator in Taiwan, I also learned from this study that only when I first acknowledge the sociocultural factors of my students and take them into account will any critical perspective of teacher education be possible so that practice will not be alienated from theory. I also learned from Mana that only when I take my future students' personalized theories, common sense approach, experience, belief, personality, value, awareness, and identity as well as resistance into consideration will theory not be alienated from practice.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Teaching background prior to enrolling in an MA TESOL program

1. Did you teach before enrolling in your MA TESOL program?
2. If the answer to number 1 is "yes", how many years experience did you have before enrolling in your MA TESOL program?
3. What subjects and levels did you teach?

Decisions to enroll in an MA TESOL program

1. Had you thought about going to another country to pursue your MA TESOL? If so, to what other country?
2. For EFL teachers, were there any MA TESOL programs in your home country?

MA TESOL program in which you studied

1. Where did you study for your MA TESOL?
2. Was there a separate department of TESOL or did you study in a related department? Under what school/college and department did you study?
3. How long did it take to fulfill your department's requirements for graduation?
4. Did you pursue your degree full-time or part-time?
5. What were the admissions requirements for your program?
6. What were the graduation requirements for your program?
7. What courses were required?
8. How many credit hours were necessary to fulfill your degree requirements?
9. Did your MA TESOL program include a practicum?
10. When you entered your MA TESOL program, did you know where you would ultimately teach, the course, or the level?
11. What elective courses did you take?
12. Do you wish you could have taken more elective courses? If so, from what disciplines?
13. In your opinion did you ever take classes in your MA TESOL program in which you questioned the applicability of the material of the material presented to your teaching experience in your home country?
14. In a required course in your MA TESOL program, approximately how many students would you find in a class?
    a. less than 5 b. 5 – 10 c. 11 – 15 d. 16 – 20 e. more than 20
15. In a required course in your MA TESOL program, approximately how many students who were **non-native speakers** of English would you find in a class?
    a. less than 5 b. 5 – 10 c. 11 – 15 d. 16 – 20 e. more than 20
16. What was the approximate ratio of non-native speakers of English to native speakers of English in your MA TESOL program?
17. In your MA TESOL program, how many classes did you take that were *specifically* for future ESL teachers? Please list the classes you remember.
18. In your MA TESOL program, how many classes did you take that were *specifically* for future EFL teachers? Please list the classes you remember.

Questions on a scale of 1 to 10 (1= the lowest score; 10=the highest)

1. To what degree did your MA TESOL program fulfill your
   Personal goals _____
   Academic goals _____
   Professional goals _____
2. How would you rate your experience in your MA TESOL program?
   Instructors _____
   Program content _____
   Interaction with native speakers
   Interaction with non-native speakers

Administration _____

Teaching experience after receiving your MA TESOL degree

1. What level(s) and course(s) did you teach after receiving your MA TESOL? For how long did you teach these classes/levels?

Reflectivity in the present

1. Do you feel that you teach differently now that you have received your MA TESOL?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, in which 1 is the lowest score and 10 is the highest, how would your rate the transferability/applicability of what you learned in your MA TESOL program to your teaching in your own classroom or in your own country?

Appendix B

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Why did you decide to teach ESL/EFL?
2. What would a "typical" day in your EFL/ESL class look like? What would you be doing and what would your students be doing? Would your materials be self-generated, published, or assigned? How many students would be in your class? How many hours a week would you teach these students? (For ESL teachers: Do you share a room with another teacher or do you have a room of your own?)
3. (For EFL students) Why did you choose to pursue your MA TESOL degree in the USA?
4. What made you choose your particular program in the USA?
5. Before you began your MA TESOL program, what were your personal, academic, and professional goals? What influenced you to establish these goals?
6. What courses did you take for your MA TESOL program? Were there prerequisite courses? Was there a pre-established sequence of courses?
7. Why did you take the elective classes that you took?
8. Did you wish you could have taken more elective courses? Which courses would you have taken? (prompt ideas: CALL, composition, music, art, etc.)
9. How did you like your MA TESOL program? What did you think about the courses you took?
10. In retrospect, what did you like most about your program when you were working on your MA TESOL? What did you like least?
11. While working in your MA TESOL program, did you think of anything about your program that could have been done differently? (prompt ideas: instructor could have taught a class differently, content of class could have been different/modified, a course should have been added or omitted --- NOTE: this is a hard question to answer!)
12. In your opinion have you ever taken classes in your MA TESOL program in which you questioned the applicability of the material of the material presented to your teaching experience in your home country? Elaborate, please.
13. (For EFL teachers) Did you have instructors in your MA TESOL program who had practical teaching experience in EFL?
14. (For ESL teachers) Did you have instructors in your MA TESOL program who had practical teaching experience in ESL?
15. Were you able to implement the concepts and ideas of your MA TESOL program to your teaching experience after receiving your degree? If not, why?
16. How did you feel when you started teaching ESL or EFL right after graduation? How did you like teaching ESL or EFL students? Based on your teaching experience since receiving your MA TESOL, what were the most valuable things you learned from your program?
17. Did you have difficulty applying what you learned in your MA TESOL program to your teaching? If so what kind of difficulties did you face? Can you give an example?
18. What would you have done differently in your MA TESOL program now that you have teaching experience after graduating from your MA TESOL program? Are there courses you would have taken or dropped?
19. (For EFL teachers) Did you feel you were well-prepared to be an EFL teacher in your home country after you received your MA TESOL degree? Why or why not? (For ESL teachers) Did you feel you were well-prepared to be an ESL teacher after you received your MA TESOL degree? Why or why not?
20. Do you feel that your teaching has changed since you received your MA TESOL?
21. Based on your teaching experience after your MA TESOL degree, do you have any suggestions for modifying your MA TESOL program?
22. In retrospect, while you were working on your MA TESOL, what did you think would be most important for your teaching after you graduated? Did you use what you thought would be so important? If not, why?
23. Did you think you are/were a successful teacher? What made you as successful or unsuccessful as you feel you are?
24. Do you think your MA TESOL program made you a more successful teacher? Can you give an example that ties your MA TESOL program to a positive teaching experience?

25. Do you feel your MA TESOL program equally served the needs of EFL and ESL teachers or teachers-to-be? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
26. If there was such a program as TEFOL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language as opposed to TESOL) in the USA, would you take classes/pursue a degree in this field? Why?
27. If you could go back to your pre-MA TESOL program days, knowing what you know now, would you choose to pursue your MA TESOL? Would you choose your particular MA TESOL program?
28. Would you recommend your MA TESOL program to someone who would like to train to be an EFL teacher? Would you recommend it to someone who would like to train to be an ESL teacher?